The Battle

By

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CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER THE BALL.

A FEW nights later Philip kept his promise to Jenny Moran and accompanied her to one of the numerous balls that form so important a factor of the social life of the lower east side of New York in winter.

As they entered the hall about 200 couples were doing a slow twostep with set and serious faces, most of the girls chewing gum in time to the measure and many of the young men holding lighted cigars or cigarettes between two fingers, while the other two clasped the lady's hand.

One look at Philip's face showed Jenny that he did not care much for this, and as she cared very little about it herself (what she wanted was to get him alone) she suggested that they go up into the gallery and look on, and, if Philip felt like ordering two glasses of beer, why, that would be very nice. Philip ordered the beer, and they took seats in the gallery.

Presently the music struck up an inviting waltz with a languorous, intensified beat, and Jenny leaned forward with a half sad, half longing expression which, she knew very well, heightened her beauty, especially in profile. Then suddenly she turned to him with a warm, appealing look. "I suppose I must give it all up, mustn't I, Phil?"

She was like a disappointed child, and he felt sorry for her. "You mean dancing? Why, no! There's no harm in dancing."

They danced the next waltz, and as Philip held the lithe young creature and felt her graceful, supple movements he realized vaguely that she was not created for factory toil and a dull tenement life. And Jenny, gliding to the delicious measure, forgot all but one thing—that she was here in Philip's arms.

On their way home Philip tried to have a serious talk with her, but it was not so easy to say just the right thing.

They did not talk much after that, but Philip thought for a long time about this evening, with its apparently trivial happenings, and somehow they filled him with a vague uneasiness.

In the morning he awoke pale and unrefreshed, and when he joined the Moran household after breakfast Haggleton observed that he looked tired.

"It's nothing," said Philip; "I'm not accustomed to balls."

Haggleton went out with Philip. He, too, had slept badly. He had been awakened when Jenny came in, and for more than an hour he had thought about this boy, his son. He did not like the idea of his going out with Jenny Moran.

The old man began by talking about Margaret.

"She looks to me like a fine girl," he approved, "but if I know anything about women she's got a bit of spirit in her, and—you'd better cut out anybody else."

"You mean Jenny," said Philip, who started to explain the situation as well as he could without revealing Jenny's previous life, but Haggleton interrupted him: "I know about that. I have lived sixty years with my eyes wide open. It's not so hard to guess as you think, young man."

"Then you must approve of my doing what I can to help her?"

"Does it help her much to dance with her?" replied Haggleton dryly.

"If other people had felt their responsibility toward her as I do, she wouldn't be where she is today."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Haggleton.

"You control the New York Midland, don't you?"

"Why, I—I suppose so," answered Haggleton, surprised at this sudden turn.

"Well, the New York Midland killed her husband at one of its grade crossings. The law commands you to put gates at these crossings, but you laugh at the law, and every year you kill hundreds of innocent citizens as you killed her husband. Then you refused to pay her a cent of damages, and as she was a poor woman she couldn't press the suit. So she was left without a dollar in the world, and she had a little baby, and—well, the end of it was she went to the bad."

"I didn't know that," said Haggleton.

"There's a good deal you rich men don't know and don't want to know. I tell you, Jenny Moran would be a good woman today if she'd had a fair chance. And, if you think I'm going to turn my back on her as your criminal railroad did, then you're very much mistaken."

One morning, a day or two after the millionaire's second tour with Philip among his tenements, a boy arrived from the bakery to tell Moran that he was to take charge of the night shift and must report that evening at 6. Moran sent him back with word that he could bring the assistant he had already spoken about if he were needed, and the answer came shortly afterward by the same carrier that he must not fail to do so. The helper had "completely given out." It was typhoid beyond a doubt.

Having warned Haggleton to take a good rest in the afternoon, the baker disappeared, as usual. The millionaire, with the beginning of his new career before him and anticipating busy days to come, decided to pay another visit of inspection to his tenements, but this time alone. Philip was known and welcomed wherever he went, but the owner of all this shameful property earning blood money had the strange experience of having doors slammed in his face and of being ordered out of his own houses by his own janitors, who looked upon him with darkest suspicion. Yet wherever he went he could not help seeing that conditions, bad as they were in themselves, were aggravated at least 50 per cent by the shiftlessness, the neglect, of his tenants. Haggleton was beginning to formulate his own plans of tenement reform. He would keep them to himself until the proper moment came to lay them before his son. At least they would be practical.

By 1 he was back home and at Jenny's suggestion lay down to get some sleep. By 5 Moran came in and, after another tirade against capital, bade him prepare to accompany him.

The plumbing in the bakeshop was all defective, Moran explained as they made their way to the place, the traps to sink and soil pipes being out of order, so that the water was in danger of contamination.

"Not the water you use in making bread?" questioned Haggleton.

"That's the only water we have," replied Moran; "it's the only water John J. gives us."

"Haggleton? What has he to do with it?"

"Just a little—he owns the property."

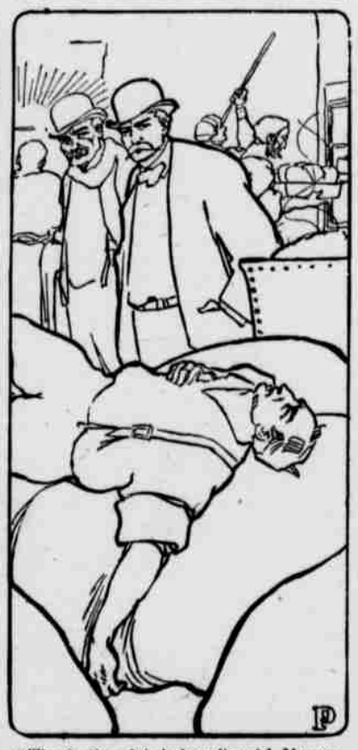
They stopped before a six story tenement on Market street.

"Careful, now," cautioned Moran. "Hold on to the railing. It's steep."

He led the way down into a deep hole under the street, the iron steps slanting like a ladder and slippery with mud and ice. Haggleton followed cautiously and found himself in a long, low basement lighted here and there by flaring gas jets. As the door opened he felt a hot, foul breath as from a sour and moldy cavern. The air was full of white dust, the walls were damp and greenish white, bare bricks showing in places where the plaster had fallen off, and the wooden floor was sifted over with a mealy mixture of flour and dirt.

It was about 6 o'clock, and already two men were preparing for the night's work, stripping off filthy clothing down to the undershirts and throwing the garments upon convenient flour barrels. The men were pallid and hollow eyed. One, in a red shirt, coughed constantly; the other chewed tobacco.

As Haggleton's eyes became accustomed to the dust and the uncertain



"That's the sick helper," said Moran.

light he discovered a grayish figure lying on a pile of bags behind a steaming vat. It was a man asleep, his head resting on a sack of flour.

"That's the sick helper," said Moran.

"The one who has typhoid fever?"

"We don't know what kind of fever it is."

"But he ought not to be here. He ought not to be sleeping on that sack of flour. You won't use the flour, will you?"

Moran laughed. "The flour he's sleeping on? Sure, we'll use it. We don't mind a little thing like that."

Haggleton took off his coat and prepared to work.

"I'll start you at something easy," said Moran—"down here."

They went to the ovens, where the "third hand" was taking out a batch of finished loaves, about 150 of them ranged along in yellow circles on the hot brick floor. He stood at the iron door, thrusting in a long handled, flat wooden shovel, on which by a quick movement he would slide two or three of the crackling loaves and then draw them out.

"Now," said Moran to Haggleton, "as he takes 'em out on the peel you put 'em in these boxes." He pointed to a pile of wooden trays. "When you get a box full brush 'em over with the stuff in that can. It's potato water, to give 'em a good color."

Moran illustrated this operation once and then left the old man to continue it, which he did to the best of his ability. Occasionally the "third hand" would lay down his peel and stop to cough. Then he would spit on the floor and go back to his work.

"Now run 'em up to the shop," ordered Moran when they had finished—"there, on that dumb waiter. A boy 'll take 'em off."

"You're a pretty fair helper," chuckled Moran; "ought to be worth $6 a week."

"More than that," replied Haggleton. "Where did you get the potato water I put on those loaves? I mean the water, not the potatoes."

"There, at the sink. Yes, the one with no trap to it—the typhoid fever sink. You're thinking it won't do people any good to eat that bread. Maybe not. Huh! Now you can do some kneading."

They went to a long trough where the tobacco chewer was in hand to hand conflict with a great mass of dough, three or four hundred pounds, that seemed to writhe and quiver in his arms like a live creature.

"You watch him awhile and then do the rest," said Moran.

Haggleton watched the "second hand" and presently took his turn at the trough and struggled with the dough. For twenty minutes he turned the sticky, sodden mass over and over upon itself, kneading it and crushing it down and tearing it apart until his whole body ached.

"That'll do," relented Moran finally.

"What are those brown stains in the trough?" asked Haggleton.

Moran examined the stains and frowned. "That fool has been dribbling tobacco juice in the dough again. Petro," he said sharply, "look there! Haven't I told you to spit on the floor if you have to spit?"

"We'll make a baker of you yet, Jackson," grinned the foreman. "Before the loaves go into the oven we brush 'em over with eggs to get a nice brown. You can do that. Here's the can and brush, and the eggs are in that box. Break half a dozen in the can and go ahead."

Haggleton obeyed, but presently came back to Moran, holding the can at arm's length and wrinkling his nose with little sniffs. "These eggs are bad."

"Are, eh? Well, what do you expect for 30 cents a hundred?"

"I didn't think you would use bad eggs," said the old man.

"You're not here to think, Mr. Jackson. I told you what to do. Now do it."

So the night advanced, and Haggleton worked with scarcely a pause. He rolled barrels and dragged bags as fresh flour was needed; he carried coke for the fires and split wood; he helped at the sponging tubs; he sifted flour; he bent over the kneading trough; he carried boxes; he drew water at the sink; he worked the dumb waiter; he stood by at the ovens, and he never complained. At 10 o'clock he thought his strength had failed him; he was sore all over and sick and weak, but he forced himself to keep on.

At midnight he asked for a few minutes' rest, but Moran shook his head; he must do his work; another batch of loaves was ready—ready for the eggs. The eggs! His stomach at last revolted, and he had a violent fit of vomiting.

"Knocked out, eh?" said Moran. "Lie down there."

The old man lay down on some bags of flour. He groaned, and for a long time he did not move.

Presently Moran came over to him.

"It always makes a new man sick. You'll get used to it."

"I hope not," said Haggleton. "Are there many bakeshops like this in New York?"

"Dozens, and some worse."

"Not worse than this?"

"Huh!" retorted Moran. "I'd like to show you one on Allen street, dogs and chickens all about, and—hey, Petro," he called, "roll that barrel here."

Petro rolled over a barrel filled with crumbs of sour bread and moldy dough and sweepings from the floor.

"See that?" continued Moran. "We let it go as garbage, but there are bakers who use it. Yes, sir; they soak it in stuff that takes away the smell, then they dry it and put in currants and molasses and bake it into cakes. And heaven knows who eats 'em."

"That's an outrage!"

Moran leaned toward him with a gleam of hatred. "I'll tell you another outrage, Mr. Jackson—it's when a landlord takes big rent for a rotten cellar like this and won't fix the plumbing. No wonder we're sick. I worked in a cellar bakeshop on Hester street where the plumbing was so bad we got a back flow from the sewer every time it rained hard, and the whole floor was—well, I'll cut out the rest."

"Great Scott!" muttered Haggleton, "but all this must be against the law!"

Moran laughed harshly. "That's fine to talk about law. Why aren't the laws enforced against trusts and railroads? Because somebody has mighty good grafting reasons for not enforcing them. It's the same here."

"H'm!" said Haggleton. "How many bakeshops are there in New York?"

"Twenty-five hundred or so. There must be 15,000 bakers in New York, easy."

Haggleton went on quietly, "You say there's a lot of sickness among them?"

"Sickness!" burst out Moran. "Of course there's a lot of sickness! There's rheumatism and asthma and fever and consumption. That's the worst—consumption." He paused, and a grim smile spread over his thin face.

"Go on," said Haggleton.

"You know bread is spongy stuff and takes up anything near it—germs and dirt and bad water. Well, we make the bread, but they eat it—the millionaires!"

"Not this bread?"

(Continued on page 11, part 2.)